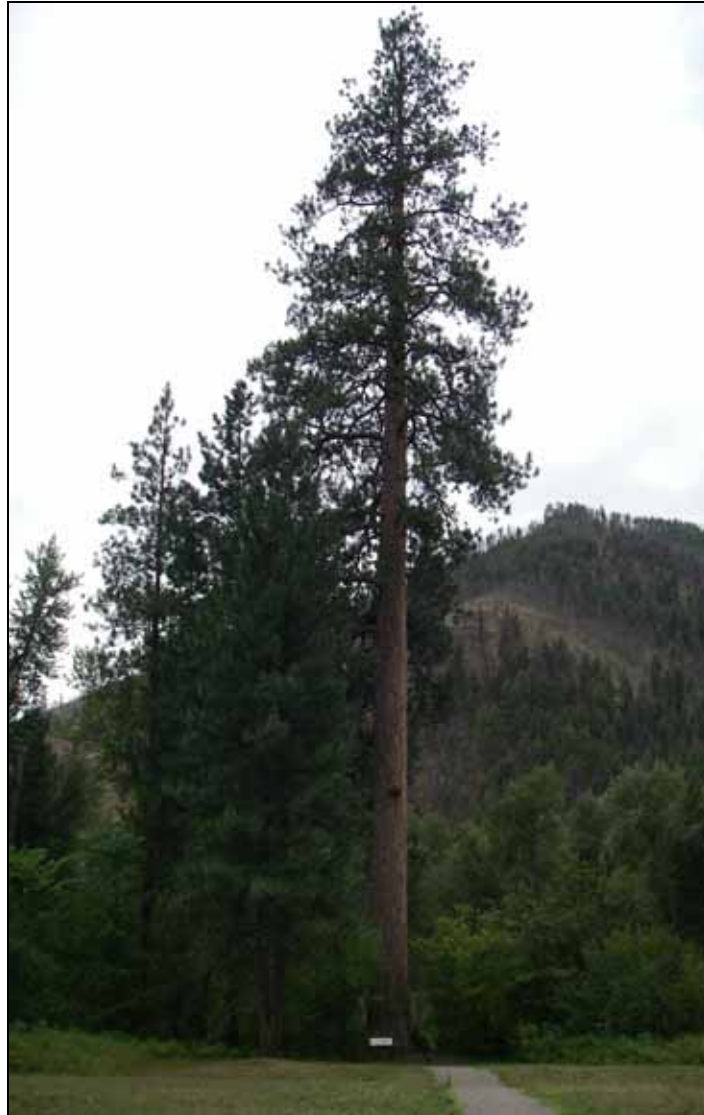


**Draft
Environmental Assessment
Big Pine Creek Bank Stabilization**



November 2008



***Montana Fish,
Wildlife & Parks***

Environmental Assessment MEPA, NEPA, MCA 23-1-110 CHECKLIST

PART I. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION

1. Proposed state action:

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) proposes to construct a logjam consisting of native green and aged woody debris along a portion of the bank of Fish Creek at Big Pine Fishing Access Site (FAS). The logjam is intended to redirect the flow of the creek in order to reestablish and protect the highly erodible soils that surround the base of the "big pine." The "big pine" is the largest known ponderosa pine tree in Montana, standing nearly 200 feet tall and measuring over 6 feet in diameter.

2. Agency authority for the proposed action:

FWP has the authority to develop outdoor recreational resources in the state per 23-2-101 MCA: *"for the purpose of conserving the scenic, historic, archaeologic, scientific, and recreational resources of the state and providing their use and enjoyment, thereby contributing to the cultural, recreational, and economic life of the people and their health."*

3. Name of project: Big Pine Creek Bank Stabilization

4. Project sponsor:

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
3201 Spurgin Road
Missoula, MT 59804
406-542-5500

5. Estimated Schedule of Events:

Estimated Construction/Commencement Date: December 2008

Estimated Completion Date: By Spring 2009

Current Status of Project Design: 100% complete

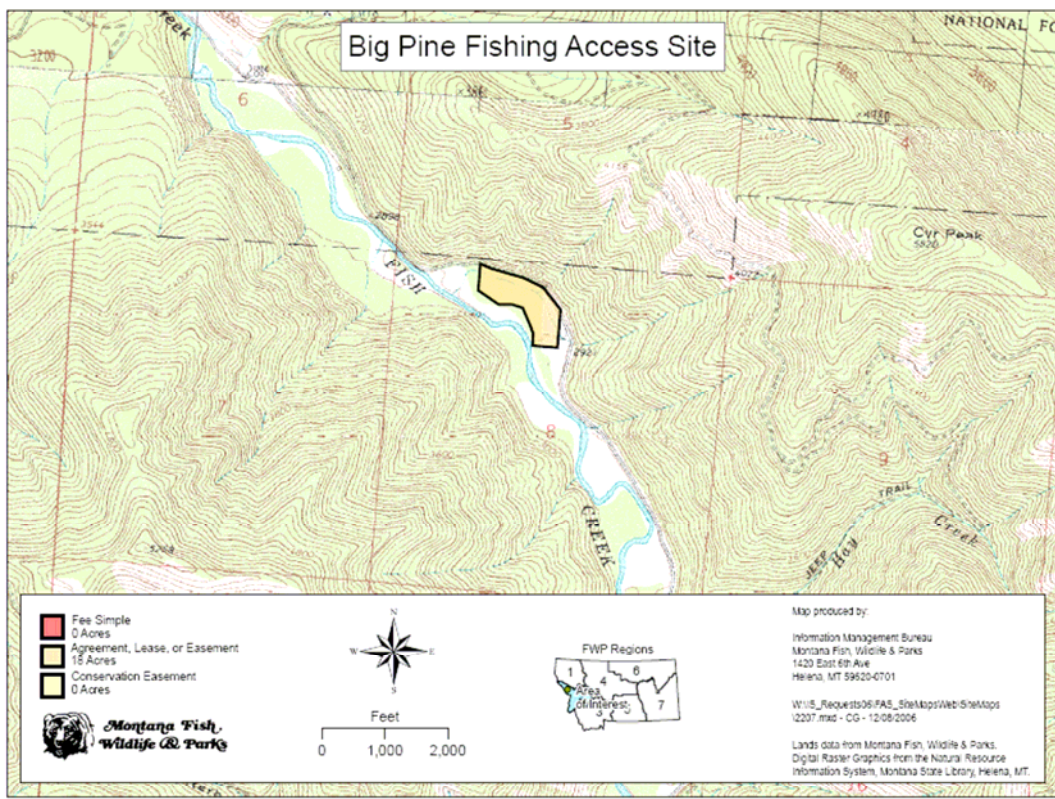
6. Location:

Big Pine FAS is located 37 miles west of Missoula on Interstate 90, then 4.5 miles south of Exit 66 on Fish Creek Road. The site is located in Mineral County, T14N R24W Section 8. Figure 1 shows the general location of Big Pine FAS and Figure 2 shows the boundaries of the site.

Figure 1: Location Map of Big Pine FAS



Figure 2: Big Pine Fishing Access Site



7. Project size:

| | <u>Acres</u> | | <u>Acres</u> |
|-----------------------|--------------|--------------------|--------------|
| (a) Developed: | | (d) Floodplain | <u>1</u> |
| Residential | <u>0</u> | | |
| Industrial | <u>0</u> | (e) Productive: | |
| (b) Open Space/ | <u>0</u> | Irrigated cropland | <u>0</u> |
| Woodlands/Recreation | <u>0</u> | Dry cropland | <u>0</u> |
| (c) Wetlands/Riparian | <u>0</u> | Forestry | <u>0</u> |
| Areas | | Rangeland | <u>0</u> |
| | | Other | <u>0</u> |

8. Permits, Funding and Overlapping Jurisdictional Responsibilities:

(a) **Permits:** All required permits will be secured prior to construction.

| <u>Agency Name</u> | <u>Permit</u> | <u>Date Filed/#</u> |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|
| US Army Corps of Engineers | 404 | |
| Mineral County | Floodplain | |
| MT Fish, Wildlife & Parks | 124 | |
| State Historic Preservation | Clearance | 09-30-08 / # 2008100203 |
| MT Dept. of Environmental Quality | 318 Authorization | |

(b) **Funding:**

Funding will be provided through the Fish, Wildlife & Parks, Fishing Access Site capital account. The estimated amount will be \$10,000.

- (c) **Other Overlapping or Additional Jurisdictional Responsibilities:**
MT Department of Natural Resources & Conservation
Lolo National Forest – Ninemile Ranger District

9. Summary of the proposed action:

The migrating channel of Fish Creek and sustained high water flows during the spring of 2008 contributed to the erosion of stream bank between Fish Creek and the “big pine.” This erosion has threatened the stability and health of the large tree leaving only a few feet of bank remaining and exposing a small amount of the tree’s root structure. The purpose of the proposed project is to construct a diversion structure that will minimize negative impacts to the creek channel, local fish and wildlife populations and riparian habitat, and blend with the visual aesthetics of the site.

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) proposes to construct a natural-looking debris jam upstream from the “big pine” in order to direct the main force of creek flow away from the section of bank immediately adjacent to the tree. This project would utilize native green and aged woody debris to construct the jam. The construction of a logjam in this location is intended to lessen the rate and effects of erosion in order to preserve the large tree for the enjoyment of future visitors to the site. Fluvial material from the creek channel will be used to reestablish bank between the debris jam and existing stream bank. This project is expected to take 1 to 2 weeks to complete and is intended to begin in December 2008.

10. Alternatives:

Alternative A: No Action

If no action is taken, the unaltered creek channel will continue to focus the majority of spring flows directly at the bank adjacent to the “big pine.” The soil around the tree would likely continue to erode, exposing additional root structure and jeopardizing the stability of the tree. If erosion continued, the tree could succumb to stresses associated with a lack of soil and/or topple due to a lack of support. The status quo would be maintained at Big Pine FAS by FWP.

Alternative B: Creek Bank Stabilization Using Riprap

Under this alternative, a blanket of rock riprap would be placed along the stream bank to fortify the bank directly adjacent to the tree. This method would provide stabilization to the stream bank but would detract from habitat and aesthetic values due to lack of vegetation and a “natural” look. This method would not reestablish bank adjacent to the tree nor would it redirect creek flows, which could subject the riprap to being washed away over time. A short reach of riprap is also highly susceptible to long-term failure because areas with active channel migration, as is the case with Fish Creek, are highly likely to cut around it. This alternative was eliminated from further analysis due to lack of habitat and aesthetic values as well as lack of bank reestablishment.

Alternative C (Preferred): Creek Bank Stabilization Using a Native Green and Aged Woody Debris Jam to Redirect Creek Flow

Under this alternative, a logjam would be constructed from native green and aged woody debris. The logjam would be established in order to redirect creek flows from the bank adjacent to the tree. In order to provide stability and longevity to the life of the “big pine,”

existing fluvial fill would be used between the existing bank and the debris structure. This method would provide for a relatively “natural-looking” stabilization approach that would be aesthetically pleasing for visitors to the site and maintain some riparian habitat values. The use of native riparian vegetation in the stabilization project would provide additional bank stability and reduce the likelihood of structure failure. The final plans and specifications for the project will be developed by a private consultant working in consultation with FWP and US Forest Service staff. All state and federal permits will be obtained by FWP. The project construction will be completed by a private contractor skilled in stream work and directed by FWP and US Forest Service staff. The private contractor will be selected in accordance with the State’s purchasing procedures.

PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW CHECKLIST

3. Evaluation of the impacts of the Proposed Action including secondary and cumulative impacts on the Physical and Human Environment.

A. PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

| 1. <u>LAND RESOURCES</u> Will the proposed action result in: | IMPACT * | | | | | |
|--|----------|------|-------|-------------------------|-------------------------|---------------|
| | Unknown | None | Minor | Potentially Significant | Can Impact Be Mitigated | Comment Index |
| a. **Soil instability or changes in geologic substructure? | | X | | | | 1a |
| b. Disruption, displacement, erosion, compaction, moisture loss, or over-covering of soil, which would reduce productivity or fertility? | | X | | | | |
| c. **Destruction, covering or modification of any unique geologic or physical features? | | X | | | | 1c |
| d. Changes in siltation, deposition or erosion patterns that may modify the channel of a river or stream or the bed or shore of a lake? | | | X | | | 1d |
| e. Exposure of people or property to earthquakes, landslides, ground failure, or other natural hazard? | | X | | | | |

1a: The project will stabilize the shoreline, therefore decreasing instability, with no change in the geologic substructure.

1c: No unique geological or physical features exist within the immediate project area.

1d: The project will reduce bank erosion and streambed sedimentation. The woody debris jam will encroach on the creek channel but adverse effects associated with channel modifications are not anticipated. Some minor, short-term siltation is expected during extraction and placement of the fluvial material from the creek channel to the logjam.

* Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).

*** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

**** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

| 2. <u>AIR</u> Will the proposed action result in: | IMPACT * | | | | | |
|--|----------|------|-------|-------------------------|-------------------------|---------------|
| | Unknown | None | Minor | Potentially Significant | Can Impact Be Mitigated | Comment Index |
| a. **Emission of air pollutants or deterioration of ambient air quality? (Also see 13 (c).) | | | X | | | 2a |
| b. Creation of objectionable odors? | | X | | | | |
| c. Alteration of air movement, moisture, or temperature patterns or any change in climate, either locally or regionally? | | X | | | | |
| d. Adverse effects on vegetation, including crops, due to increased emissions of pollutants? | | X | | | | |
| e. ***For P-R/D-J projects, will the project result in any discharge, which will conflict with federal or state air quality regs? (Also see 2a.) | | n/a | | | | |

2a: A minor amount of emissions from construction equipment exhaust will be emitted for a short time during the project period.

* Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).

*** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

**** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

| 3. <u>WATER</u> Will the proposed action result in: | IMPACT * | | | | | |
|--|----------|------|-------|-------------------------|-------------------------|---------------|
| | Unknown | None | Minor | Potentially Significant | Can Impact Be Mitigated | Comment Index |
| a. *Discharge into surface water or any alteration of surface water quality including but not limited to temperature, dissolved oxygen or turbidity? | | | X | | | 3a |
| b. Changes in drainage patterns or the rate and amount of surface runoff? | | X | | | | |
| c. Alteration of the course or magnitude of floodwater or other flows? | | | X | | | 3c |
| d. Changes in the amount of surface water in any water body or creation of a new water body? | | X | | | | |
| e. Exposure of people or property to water related hazards such as flooding? | | X | | | | |
| f. Changes in the quality of groundwater? | | X | | | | |
| g. Changes in the quantity of groundwater? | | X | | | | |
| h. Increase in risk of contamination of surface or groundwater? | | X | | | | |
| i. Effects on any existing water right or reservation? | | X | | | | |
| j. Effects on other water users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quality? | | X | | | | |
| k. Effects on other users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quantity? | | X | | | | |
| l. ****For P-R/D-J, will the project affect a designated floodplain? (Also see 3c.) | | n/a | | | | |
| m. ***For P-R/D-J, will the project result in any discharge that will affect federal or state water quality regulations? (Also see 3a.) | | n/a | | | | |

3a: Short-term increases in turbidity will occur during project construction. To minimize turbidity, construction will occur during a low flow period and operation of equipment in the creek channel will be minimized to the extent practical. All required permits/authorizations will be obtained prior to construction.

3c: The construction of the logjam will redirect a portion of Fish Creek away from a direct path with the remaining bank supporting the "big pine". This minor course change will not affect the overall flow and direction of the creek's path in the area.

* Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).

*** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

**** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

| 4. VEGETATION Will the proposed action result in? | IMPACT * | | | | | |
|--|----------|------|-------|-------------------------|-------------------------|---------------|
| | Unknown | None | Minor | Potentially Significant | Can Impact Be Mitigated | Comment Index |
| a. Changes in the diversity, productivity or abundance of plant species (including trees, shrubs, grass, crops, and aquatic plants)? | | X | | | | |
| b. Alteration of a plant community? | | | X | | | 4b |
| c. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species? | | X | | | | 4c |
| d. Reduction in acreage or productivity of any agricultural land? | | X | | | | |
| e. Establishment or spread of noxious weeds? | | X | | | | |
| f. ****For P-R/D-J, will the project affect wetlands, or prime and unique farmland? | | n/a | | | | |

4b: Live native green trees will be selected from areas close to the project location for placement in the logjam. The number of trees required for the project and individual tree selection are not expected to have long-term adverse impacts on local plant communities.

4c: A search of the Montana Natural Heritage Program's (MNHP) species of concern database found no vascular or non-vascular plants of significance within the boundaries of the project area.

* Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).

*** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

**** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

| ** 5. <u>FISH/WILDLIFE</u> Will the proposed action result in: | IMPACT * | | | | | |
|--|-----------------|-------------|--------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------|
| | Unknown | None | Minor | Potentially Significant | Can Impact Be Mitigated | Comment Index |
| a. Deterioration of critical fish or wildlife habitat? | | X | | | | |
| b. Changes in the diversity or abundance of game animals or bird species? | | X | | | | |
| c. Changes in the diversity or abundance of nongame species? | | X | | | | |
| d. Introduction of new species into an area? | | X | | | | |
| e. Creation of a barrier to the migration or movement of animals? | | X | | | | |
| f. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species? | | | X | | | 5f |
| g. Increase in conditions that stress wildlife populations or limit abundance (including harassment, legal or illegal harvest or other human activity)? | | X | | | | |
| h. ****For P-R/D-J, will the project be performed in any area in which T&E species are present, and will the project affect any T&E species or their habitat? (Also see 5f.) | | n/a | | | | |
| i. ***For P-R/D-J, will the project introduce or export any species not presently or historically occurring in the receiving location? (Also see 5d.) | | n/a | | | | |

5f: A search of the Montana Natural Heritage database revealed 8 species of concern in the vicinity of the project area. Species of concern include gray wolf (endangered status), Canada lynx (threatened status), wolverine, fisher, bald eagle (threatened status), black-backed woodpecker, bull trout (threatened status) and westslope cutthroat trout. There have been no documented cases of species within the immediate project area and FWP does not expect terrestrial species or their habitats to be negatively affected by the proposed bank stabilization project. Bull trout do inhabit the creek and spawn during fall months of the year, however spawning areas are located a considerable distance upstream of the project area and this project will not detract from the migration corridor or the ability of juvenile bull trout to rear in this reach. Addition of large wood will enhance natural channel complexity and is viewed as a benefit to fish habitat conditions. The creek channel will remain passable by all fish species throughout the duration of the project and any minor sediment releases in the creek as a result of the project are not expected to have a negative impact on fish habitat or passage.

* Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).

*** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

**** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

B. HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

| 6. <u>NOISE/ELECTRICAL EFFECTS</u> Will the proposed action result in: | IMPACT * | | | | | |
|--|----------|------|-------|-------------------------|-------------------------|---------------|
| | Unknown | None | Minor | Potentially Significant | Can Impact Be Mitigated | Comment Index |
| a. Increases in existing noise levels? | | | X | | | 6a |
| b. Exposure of people to serve or nuisance noise levels? | | X | | | | |
| c. Creation of electrostatic or electromagnetic effects that could be detrimental to human health or property? | | X | | | | |
| d. Interference with radio or television reception and operation? | | X | | | | |

6a: There will be an increase in noise near the project site from equipment used to do the work. This will only occur during project construction.

| 7. <u>LAND USE</u> Will the proposed action result in: | IMPACT * | | | | | |
|--|----------|------|-------|-------------------------|-------------------------|---------------|
| | Unknown | None | Minor | Potentially Significant | Can Impact Be Mitigated | Comment Index |
| a. Alteration of or interference with the productivity or profitability of the existing land use of an area? | | X | | | | |
| b. Conflicted with a designated natural area or area of unusual scientific or educational importance? | | X | | | | |
| c. Conflict with any existing land use whose presence would constrain or potentially prohibit the proposed action? | | X | | | | |
| d. Adverse effects on or relocation of residences? | | X | | | | |

* Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).

*** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

**** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

| 8. <u>RISK/HEALTH HAZARDS</u> Will the proposed action result in: | IMPACT * | | | | | |
|---|----------|------|-------|-------------------------|-------------------------|---------------|
| | Unknown | None | Minor | Potentially Significant | Can Impact Be Mitigated | Comment Index |
| a. Risk of an explosion or release of hazardous substances (including, but not limited to oil, pesticides, chemicals, or radiation) in the event of an accident or other forms of disruption? | | X | | | | |
| b. Affect an existing emergency response or emergency evacuation plan, or create a need for a new plan? | | X | | | | |
| c. Creation of any human health hazard or potential hazard? | | X | | | | |
| d. ***For P-R/D-J, will any chemical toxicants be used? (Also see 8a) | | n/a | | | | |

| 9. <u>COMMUNITY IMPACT</u> Will the proposed action result in: | IMPACT * | | | | | |
|--|----------|------|-------|-------------------------|-------------------------|---------------|
| | Unknown | None | Minor | Potentially Significant | Can Impact Be Mitigated | Comment Index |
| a. Alteration of the location, distribution, density, or growth rate of the human population of an area? | | X | | | | |
| b. Alteration of the social structure of a community? | | X | | | | |
| c. Alteration of the level or distribution of employment or community or personal income? | | X | | | | |
| d. Changes in industrial or commercial activity? | | X | | | | |
| e. Increased traffic hazards or effects on existing transportation facilities or patterns of movement of people and goods? | | X | | | | |

* Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).

*** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

**** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

| 10. <u>PUBLIC SERVICES/TAXES/UTILITIES</u> Will the proposed action result in: | IMPACT * | | | | | |
|---|----------|------|-------|-------------------------|-------------------------|---------------|
| | Unknown | None | Minor | Potentially Significant | Can Impact Be Mitigated | Comment Index |
| a. Will the proposed action have an effect upon or result in a need for new or altered governmental services in any of the following areas: fire or police protection, schools, parks/recreational facilities, roads or other public maintenance, water supply, sewer or septic systems, solid waste disposal, health, or other governmental services? If any, specify: | | X | | | | |
| b. Will the proposed action have an effect upon the local or state tax base and revenues? | | X | | | | |
| c. Will the proposed action result in a need for new facilities or substantial alterations of any of the following utilities: electric power, natural gas, other fuel supply or distribution systems, or communications? | | X | | | | |
| d. Will the proposed action result in increased use of any energy source? | | X | | | | |
| e. **Define projected revenue sources | | | | | | 10e |
| f. **Define projected maintenance costs. | | | | | | 10f |

10e: The proposed project will be paid for with FWP fishing access site capital project funds.

10f: Future maintenance costs are expected to be minimal and coverable under existing operating budgets.

* Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).

*** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

**** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

| ** 11. <u>AESTHETICS/RECREATION</u> Will the proposed action result in: | IMPACT * | | | | | |
|--|-----------------|-------------|--------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------|
| | Unknown | None | Minor | Potentially Significant | Can Impact Be Mitigated | Comment Index |
| a. Alteration of any scenic vista or creation of an aesthetically offensive site or effect that is open to public view? | | X | | | | |
| b. Alteration of the aesthetic character of a community or neighborhood? | | X | | | | |
| c. **Alteration of the quality or quantity of recreational/tourism opportunities and settings? (Attach Tourism Report.) | | X | | | | 11c |
| d. ***For P-R/D-J, will any designated or proposed wild or scenic rivers, trails or wilderness areas be impacted? (Also see 11a, 11c.) | | n/a | | | | |

11c: This project is likely to improve the quantity and/or quality of tourism and recreation opportunities. (See Appendix B)

| 12. <u>CULTURAL/HISTORICAL RESOURCES</u> Will the proposed action result in: | IMPACT * | | | | | |
|---|-----------------|-------------|--------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------|
| | Unknown | None | Minor | Potentially Significant | Can Impact Be Mitigated | Comment Index |
| a. **Destruction or alteration of any site, structure or object of prehistoric historic, or paleontological importance? | | X | | | | 12a |
| b. Physical change that would affect unique cultural values? | | X | | | | |
| c. Effects on existing religious or sacred uses of a site or area? | | X | | | | |
| d. ****For P-R/D-J, will the project affect historic or cultural resources? Attach SHPO letter of clearance. (Also see 12.a.) | | n/a | | | | |

12a: Based on consultation with the Montana State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), there is a low likelihood that cultural properties will be impacted. (See Appendix C). Should cultural materials be inadvertently discovered during this project, FWP will notify SHPO.

* Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).

*** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

**** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

| 13. <u>SUMMARY EVALUATION OF SIGNIFICANCE</u> Will the proposed action, considered as a whole: | IMPACT * | | | | | |
|---|----------|------|-------|-------------------------|-------------------------|---------------|
| | Unknown | None | Minor | Potentially Significant | Can Impact Be Mitigated | Comment Index |
| a. Have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? (A project or program may result in impacts on two or more separate resources that create a significant effect when considered together or in total.) | | X | | | | |
| b. Involve potential risks or adverse effects, which are uncertain but extremely hazardous if they were to occur? | | X | | | | |
| c. Potentially conflict with the substantive requirements of any local, state, or federal law, regulation, standard or formal plan? | | X | | | | |
| d. Establish a precedent or likelihood that future actions with significant environmental impacts will be proposed? | | X | | | | |
| e. Generate substantial debate or controversy about the nature of the impacts that would be created? | | X | | | | |
| f. ***For P-R/D-J, is the project expected to have organized opposition or generate substantial public controversy? (Also see 13e.) | | n/a | | | | |
| g. ****For P-R/D-J, list any federal or state permits required. | | n/a | | | | |

* Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).

*** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

**** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

2. Evaluation and listing of mitigation, stipulation, or other control measures enforceable by the agency or another government agency:

The final plans and specifications for the project will be developed by a private consultant working in consultation with FWP and US Forest Service staff. All state and federal permits will be obtained by FWP. The project construction will be completed by a private contractor skilled in stream work and directed by FWP and US Forest Service staff. The private contractor will be selected in accordance with the State's purchasing procedures.

PART III. NARRATIVE EVALUATION AND COMMENT

The proposed action is not expected to have negative cumulative effects on the physical and/or human environments. The minor impacts identified in the previous sections are most likely to occur in relation to the construction phase of the project. There are no lasting negative effects anticipated in relation to this project.

The proposed project would utilize the least intrusive construction techniques whenever possible to limit short-term effects associated with the project. Once completed, the proposed protective structure would blend in with the riparian environment in order to maintain the aesthetics of the surrounding viewshed. The relocation of naturally occurring woody debris to create the logjam would also maintain continuity with existing riparian habitat. Protecting the erodible soils surrounding the base of the "big pine" from high spring flows could increase the potential lifespan of the tree and preserve future opportunities for visitors to observe this unique and awe-inspiring ponderosa pine.

PART IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

1. Public Involvement:

The public will be notified in the following manner to comment on this current EA, the proposed action and alternatives:

- One public notice in each of these papers: *Missoulian*, *Helena Independent Record*, *Mineral Independent* and *Clark Fork Chronicle*.
- One statewide press release;
- Direct mailing to adjacent landowners and interested parties;
- The EA will be posted on the FWP web page (<http://fwp.mt.gov>) under "Recent Public Notices."
- The EA will be available at FWP Region 2 Headquarters.

This level of public notice and participation is deemed appropriate for a project of this scope having few minor impacts.

2. Duration of comment period.

The public comment period will extend for 30 days following the publication of the legal notice in area newspapers (November 6, 2008). Written comments will be accepted until 5:00 p.m. December 5, 2008 and can be mailed to the address below:

Big Pine Creek Bank Stabilization
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
Region 2 Headquarters
3201 Spurgin Road
Missoula, MT 59804

Or email comments to: ccrowser@mt.gov

PART V. EA PREPARATION

1. **Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this EA, is an EIS required? (YES/NO)?** No

If an EIS is not required, explain why the EA is the appropriate level of analysis for this proposed action.

Based upon the above assessment, which has identified a limited number of minor impacts associated with the proposed action, an EIS is not required because this environmental assessment provides an appropriate level of review and analysis.

2. **Person responsible for preparing the EA:**

Chet Crowser
River Recreation Manager
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
3201 Spurgin Road
Missoula, MT 59804
406-542-5562

3. **Agencies consulted during preparation of the EA:**

Lolo National Forest – Nine-mile Ranger District

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks:

- Parks Division
- Wildlife Division
- Fisheries Division
- Legal Bureau

Montana Department of Natural Resources & Conservation

Montana Department of Commerce – Tourism

Montana State Historic Preservation Office – (SHPO)

Montana Natural Heritage Program – Natural Resources Information System (NRIS)

Mineral County – Conservation District & Flood Plain Administrator

APPENDICES

- A. MCA 23-1-110 Qualification Checklist
- B. Tourism Report – Department of Commerce
- C. State Historic Preservation Office Letter

APPENDIX A: PROJECT QUALIFICATION CHECKLIST

23-1-110 MCA

Date: 10-24-08

Person Reviewing: Chet Crowser

Project Location: Big Pine Creek Bank Stabilization

Description of Proposed Work: Construction of a woody debris jam to protect a portion of the Fish Creek stream bank adjacent to the "big pine."

The following checklist is intended to be a guide for determining whether a proposed development or improvement is of enough significance to fall under 23-1-110 rules. (Please check ✓ all that apply and comment as necessary.)

- ☐ A. New roadway or trail built over undisturbed land?
Comments:
- ☐ B. New building construction (buildings <100 sf and vault latrines exempt)?
Comments:
- ☒ C. Any excavation of 20 c.y. or greater?
Comments: *Roughly 100 c.y. of native fill gathered from the project location will be used in the construction of the woody debris jam.*
- ☐ D. New parking lots built over undisturbed land or expansion of existing lot that increases parking capacity by 25% or more?
Comments:
- ☒ E. Any new shoreline alteration that exceeds a doublewide boat ramp or handicapped fishing station?
Comments: *Construction of a natural-looking logjam and reclaimed creek bank planted with native vegetation.*
- ☐ F. Any new construction into lakes, reservoirs, or streams?
Comments:
- ☐ G. Any new construction in an area with National Registry quality cultural artifacts (as determined by State Historical Preservation Office)?
Comments:
- ☐ H. Any new above ground utility lines?
Comments:

[] I. Any increase or decrease in campsites of 25% or more of an existing number of campsites?
Comments:

[] J. Proposed project significantly changes the existing features or use pattern; including effects of a series of individual projects?
Comments:

If any of the above are checked, 23-1-110 MCA rules apply to this proposed work and should be documented on the MEPA/HB495 CHECKLIST. Refer to MEPA/HB495 Cross Reference Summary for further assistance.

APPENDIX B: TOURISM REPORT

MONTANA ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT (MEPA) & MCA 23-1-110

The Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks has initiated the review process as mandated by MCA 23-1-110 and the Montana Environmental Policy Act in its consideration of the project described below. As part of the review process, input and comments are being solicited. Please complete the project name and project description portions and submit this form to:

Carol Crockett, Visitor Services Manager
Travel Montana-Department of Commerce
301 South Park Ave.
PO Box 200533
Helena, MT 59620

Project Name: Big Pine Creek Bank Stabilization Project

Project Location: Big Pine Fishing Access Site is located in Mineral County, T14N, R24W, Sec. 8.

Project Description: Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks proposes to construct a logjam consisting of green and aged woody debris along a portion of the bank of Fish Creek at Big Pine Fishing Access Site. The logjam is intended to redirect the flow of the creek in order to protect the highly erodible soils that surround the base of the "big pine." The "big pine" is the largest known ponderosa pine tree in Montana, standing nearly 200 feet tall and measuring over 6 feet in diameter. The migrating channel of Fish Creek and sustained high water flows during the spring of 2008 contributed to the erosion of stream bank between Fish Creek and the "big pine." This erosion has threatened the stability and health of the large tree leaving only a few feet of bank remaining and exposing a small amount of the tree's root structure. The purpose of the proposed project is to construct a diversion structure that will minimize negative impacts to the creek channel, local fish and wildlife populations and riparian habitat, and blend with the visual aesthetics of the site.

1. Would this site development project have an impact on the tourism economy?
NO **YES** If YES, briefly describe:

Yes, as described, the project has the potential to positively impact the tourism and recreation industry economy.

2. Does this impending improvement alter the quality or quantity of recreation/tourism opportunities and settings?
NO **YES** If YES, briefly describe:

Yes, as described, the project has the potential to improve the quality and quantity of tourism and recreational opportunities.

Signature Carol Crockett Date 9/30/08

APPENDIX C: STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE REPORT



**MONTANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY
STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE**

1410 8th Ave ♦ P.O. Box 201202 ♦ Helena, MT 59620-1201 ♦ (406)444-7715

October 6, 2008

Chet Crowser
FWP
32-1 Spurgin Road
Missoula MT 59804

RE: FISH CREEK AT BIG PINE FAS, LOGJAM CONSTRUCTION. SHPO
Project #: 2008100203

Dear Mr.Crowser:

I have conducted a cultural resource file search for the above-cited project located in Section 8, T14N R24W. According to our records there have been no previously recorded sites within the designated search locales. The absence of cultural properties in the area does not mean that they do not exist but rather may reflect the absence of any previous cultural resource inventory in the area, as our records indicated none.

We feel that there is a low likelihood cultural properties will be impacted. We, therefore, feel that a recommendation for a cultural resource inventory is unwarranted at this time. However, should cultural materials be inadvertently discovered during this project we would ask that our office be contacted and the site investigated.

If you have any further questions or comments you may contact me at (406) 444-7767 or by e-mail at dmurdo@mt.gov. Thank you for consulting with us.

Sincerely,

Damon Murdo
Cultural Records Manager

File: FWP/PARKS/2008